v.51, no. 4 (Aug 2000)

SACRED JOURNEY

THE JOURNAL OF FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER ~ AUGUST 2000

SACRED JOURNEY®

THE JOURNAL OF FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

The mission of Fellowship in Prayer is

to encourage and support

a spiritual orientation to life,

to promote the practice of

prayer,

meditation,

and service to others,

and to help bring about

a deeper spirit of unity

among humankind.

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Cover photo by Sara Wuthnow
Conference photos by Karen McLean and Brooks Walsh

CONFERENCE RECAP

"Do not wait another fifty years! Do this again!" "I liked being with a variety of people from different faith traditions." "It's so rare to find anything of this quality. What a joy to have a weekend set aside to both learn about and practice prayer with fellow companions from all over the country and beyond."

Comments like these poured into our office from the moment "Companions on the Sacred Journey" ended. More than 300 participants from California to Connecticut assembled from June 16-18, 2000 for Fellowship in Prayer's 50th Anniversary conference. The beauty of the Princeton University campus provided both unmatched charm and some challenges—"Where is East Pyne? I don't see any signs." "Why isn't the parking shuttle running?" "Can the air conditioning be turned up? It's hot!"

Despite these obstacles, participants who were strangers to each other on Friday evening joined hands and danced through the aisles following Rabbi Marcia Prager during the open-

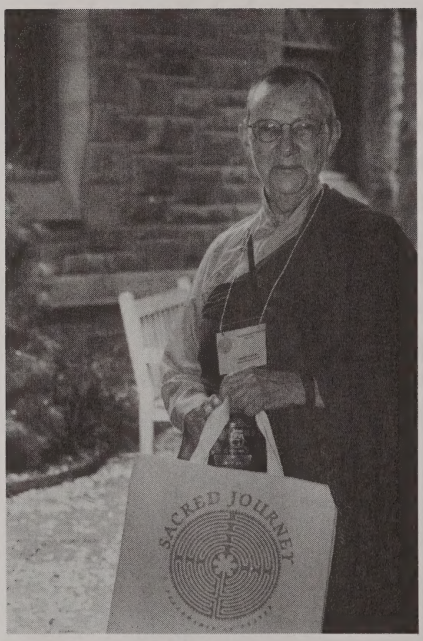
Rabbi Marcia Prager and Hazzan Jack Kessler

ing Kabbalat Shabbat service. Hazzan Jack Kessler had us robustly singing in Hebrew scant moments after many first attempted to pronounce "shalom aleikhem." None in attendance will easily forget Marcia's instructions on "face yoga" which left us basking in the Shekina, the divine glory, that radiated from Marcia's face and more surprisingly from ours.

With nary a break, Friday night continued with a keynote address. Dr. Ann Belford Ulanov, a Jungian analyst and professor of psychiatry and religion at Union Theological Seminary, eloquently explored the truth that in prayer we

Dr. Ann Belford Ulanov

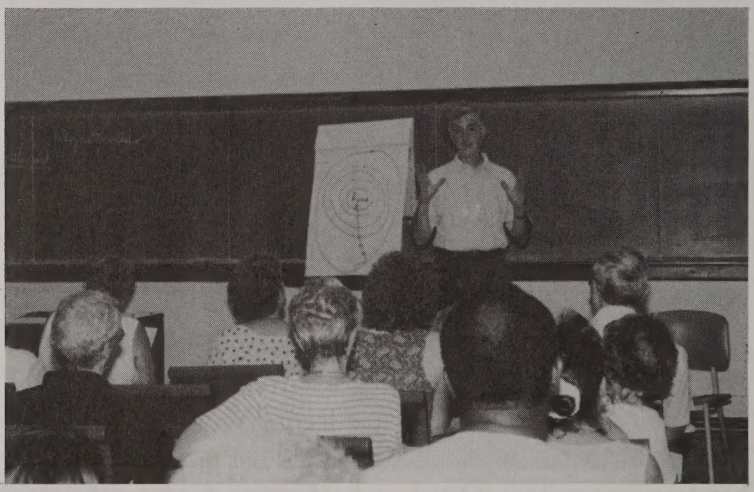
are the ones hiding and God, the one who seeks us. Tears sprang momentarily to her eyes when she described how the body grieves. Ann's husband, Barry, renowned for his intellect and beloved by decades of Barnard College students, had been scheduled to give this lecture with her, but died on April 30th. In his honor Ann ended her talk with some of his favorite quips: "Art is a half-open door to eternity.



Trime Lhamo
"Awakening Love & Compassion"

Reveling in art is prayer, too."

When Saturday dawned, participants scattered to attend workshops. Some walked the labyrinth, others were introduced to Buddhist tonglen practice or to dancing as a way of prayer. Creativity, Celtic Christianity, prayer and wholeness, spirituality and work, and the mystic tradition found in the major faith traditions were all explored by

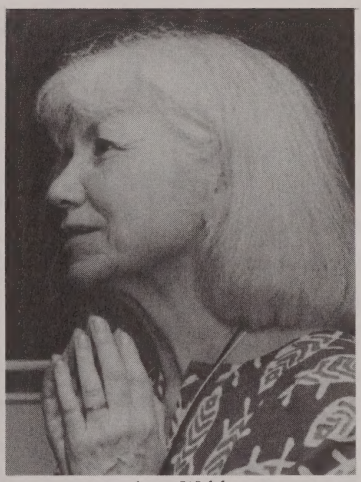


Br. Wayne Teasdale, "The Mystic Heart"

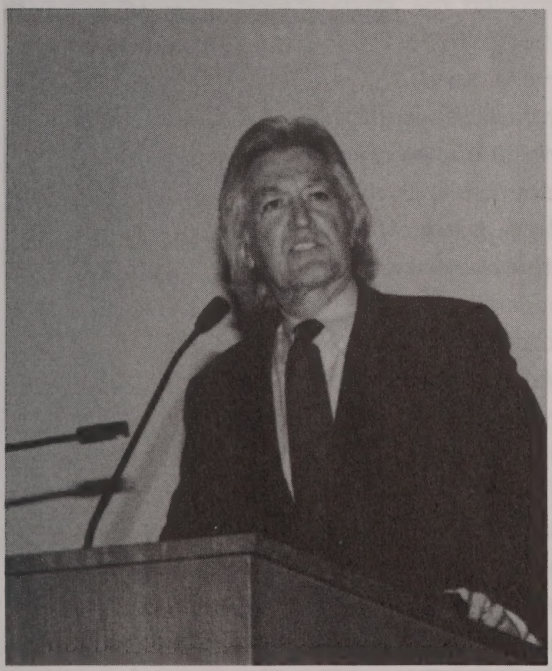
expert workshop leaders.

By late afternoon, it was time to experience prayer firsthand. In small groups, people prayed through movement, sacred reading, healing meditation, and with hymns, icons or by hearing stories.

Dr. Larry Dossey, M.D. took to the lectern for Saturday's keynote address. The lecture hall, McCosh 50, was packed, showing our



Anne Walsh
Healing Prayer Circle



Dr. Larry Dossey, M.D.

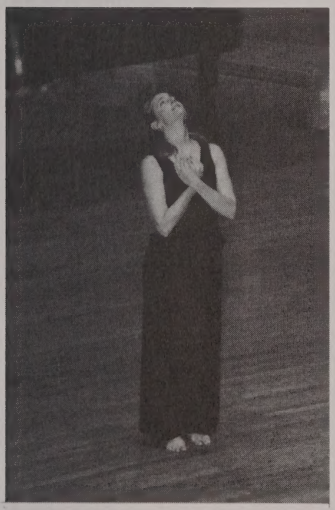
numbers had grown to nearly 400. Dossey traced his journey from early in his career when he believed prayer wouldn't stack up to medications or surgery. But studies proving the positive healing aspects of prayer crossed his desk compelling him to ask if it were ethical to withhold prayer from his patients. By the end of his lecture, Dossey provocatively pushed the healing power of prayer into another dimension, "If we take another view to see the immortal quality of who we are, we can envision another kind of medicine. Rather than 'internal' medicine, we will practice 'eternal' medicine that understands that while the body dies and rots, the essential part, the non-local aspect of the mind, couldn't die if it tried."

Mairead Doherty, Celtic Harpist

With Dr. Dossey's words fresh in our ears, more than 200 of us walked directly to the chancel of the cathedral-style University chapel where a Taize service of simple chants, reminded us "where charity and love are found, God is there." A harp and clarinet helped us join our voices in a resonate harmony before we paused to offer prayers of intercession for loved ones in need of healing and help.

Sunday came quickly and the closing celebration proved a richly layered exploration of Psalm 139. Dr. Albert Raboteau (the subject of this month's *Question & Answer* fea-

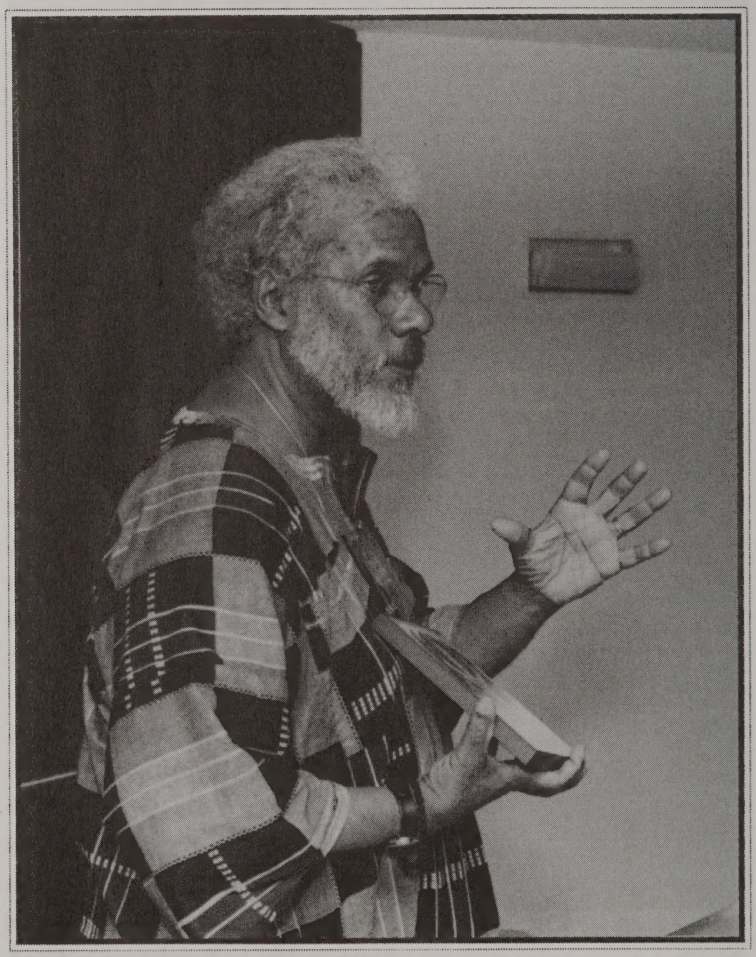
Dr. Joe Williamson, Dr. Cecelia Hodges, Rabbi Prager, Dr. Raboteau, and Rev. Laird discussing Psalm 139 "Yeshiva-Style."



Robin Becker, Dancer

ture) traced his attempts to flee from God's presence, Rabbi Prager led the congregation in Yeshiva-style, interactive learning on the text, Rebecca Laird drew a word picture of how God knits our lives together with DNA and mystery, and Robin Becker, accompanied by Darius Kauffman on native American flutes, explored the themes of Psalm 139 through dance. By the time the Princeton Girlchoir began to sing "Go Where I Send Thee" we were ready to head home, tired but wholly inspired from a wonderful weekend.

Albert J. Raboteau



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

A Sad Joyfulness

Albert J. Raboteau

If Albert Jordy Raboteau, professor of Religion glances up while working at his desk, he looks straight into the eyes of the Virgin Mary, the theotokos. *She presides from the center the icon of the burning bush by Vladislav Andrias that hangs in Raboteau's office at Princeton University. Near the window is a photograph of a 16th-century carved pendant of an African woman, the Queen Mother of Benin, that Raboteau says was carried across the Atlantic by slaves for protection. Nestled between these two powerfully feminine images, Albert Raboteau, seems absolutely at home. Dr. Raboteau's most recent book is* A Fire in the Bones: Reflections of African-American History.

Rebecca Laird: Your spiritual influences read like a who's who of spiritual giants in the second half of the twentieth century. You first read Thomas Merton's *Seven Storey Mountain* at the age of thirteen. You were learning from Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement in high school. You were involved in the civil rights movement in Berkeley during graduate school and went to Yale just as the black studies movement emerged. Who has left the greatest mark on you?

Albert Raboteau: Thomas Merton, has been for me, as he has for many people, a lasting influence because of the breadth of his interests. His ability to write and articulate his own religious experience of God so beautifully continues to influence me.

The other major influence on my life comes from African-American spirituality, particularly slave spirituality. Reality and pain come through the slave narratives alongside of the refusal to succumb to bitterness or hatred. They did not let their spirits be destroyed and their claim to spiritual power has been a lasting legacy for me. This legacy has been mediated most through my mother. She experienced difficulty and poverty, and often wondered where the next paycheck would come from or where we would live. She lived through racial injustice and the murder of my father, who was killed by a white man who walked into the grocery store where my father worked as a clerk and shot him. The white man claimed self-defence; there were no witnesses; and he was never prosecuted. The legacy of my mother's faith has left a lasting impression on me and has entered my own work and writing.

So the Christian contemplative tradition as translated by Thomas Merton and the slave spirituality as lived out by my mother are the two major influences on my life.

You write of a transforming experience you had while visiting a museum. Tell me more about what took place that day.

I went to an exhibit called, "Gates of Mystery: Sacred Art of Russia." I was arrested by the spiritual beauty of the icons. One of the *theotokos*, the Virgin Mary really captured me, and I went back three times just to stand in front of it. What captivated me was the sense of sadness that was present in her face. The sad-

ness combined with compassion and an embrace that seemed to be able to hold all the sadness in the world. I looked at her and she seemed to look at me. It was one of those moments when I was taken out of myself.

How did that encounter with icons change you?

The roots that gradually led me from that day to embrace Eastern Orthodox Christianity probably go much deeper and further back in my life, but I will try to describe those that are above ground and visible to me.

After visiting the museum, I went to a lecture associated with the ehxibit given by Bishop Kallistos Ware. There seemed to be no distance between him and his word. He appeared so integrated. From there, I went to a party where I met a man who also had been at the exhibit and had recently converted to Orthodoxy. He invited me to attend a service with him. I was entranced by the beauty of the liturgy and the icons and the warmth of the community, which was very different ethnically than anything in my Catholic background. The church was made up of mostly second and third generation Russian immigrant families.

I kept going Sunday after Sunday during a period of great crisis in my own life. That community and the liturgy were of tremendous support for me. I began to think about Orthodoxy, not intellectually by comparing Catholic and Orthodox doctrine, but as an experience of spiritual power.

A dream I had typified this. I dreamed that I was attending the local Catholic service at St. Paul's, and I went up to receive communion and as the eucharistic minister gave me the cup, I pulled out a liter bottle of bourbon from behind my back and poured it into the cup. The dream showed me that I wasn't experiencing enough spirit within my community.

That summer, I traveled to Europe and went to an Orthodox monastery in Essex, England. Being there was a very powerful spiritual experience and pilgrimage. I traveled on to the continent and went on to Asissi and Florence. I returned with a definite sense that I was being led toward Orthodoxy. Again, it wasn't so much an intellectual conversion but an experiential redirection in my spiritual life. I never felt like I was leaving Catholicism or breaking away, rather this was the direction I was led towards. After a number of years in that initial Orthodox community, a few of us felt Princeton needed its own Orthodox parish. A small mission, which is now a little over two years old, has grown steadily and has been a wonderful experience of being in a very small, intimate community.

While reading some of your writing, I noticed the recurrence of the theme "from sadness to joy." What does this phrase mean to you?

For me sadness and joy describe the way the world is and what it means to be human. The essence of the Christian gospel is found in the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I exist as a Christian knowing that the sadness, the sorrow, the evil, and the injustice are a part of the world. Justice doesn't always triumph. Inequity exists, and we will all eventually die. There is a sadness to life that is inescapable. Many of us try to evade that sadness and there is much in our culture that tries to convince us that sadness is wrong. I think this is a profound evasion of both natural and spiritual reality. There is a certain sadness that Christians have to experience and enter into with faith knowing that through Christ's resurrection, sadness can ultimately be turned into joy.

My own spirituality has particular resonance with the movement from sadness to joy because of my history and background as an African American. This theme of suffering also shows up in Latin American Christianity and is expressed most powerfully through the tonality of the African-American spirituals, which remind us that life is filled with suffering but this suffering will not overcome us. We are promised that the life and redemption of Jesus will bring us ultimate joy that will overcome the sadness if we face up to it and allow our faith to help us nagivate through it. Orthodoxy has a similar spiriutality in its emphasis on suffering as the ground of Christianity.

You've talked mostly about the sadness. Where does joy come in?

The joyfulness comes in knowing that we don't experience sadness alone. Our sadness and suffering is actually entered into and experienced along with us—God became human and entered into creation and transformed it by going through the mortality, the suffering, and the sadness that we all experience. On the other side of the sadness is this knowledge that God totally accepts us and loves us and has freed us not for meaningless existence but for ultimate joy. The wonderful thing about the joy is that it doesn't efface the suffering. The gospel narratives insist that Jesus was resurrected with his wounds. There is something of the suffering that lasts and is transformed into joy. And joy comes from the overwhelming experience of the love of God for each of us that sustains us at every moment.

You have written about your love of nature and have wonderfully described your "astonishment at the

wondrous quality of the world" that began early in your life. How does this sensitivity to beauty influence your spiritual practice?

As a child I was enchanted by the beauty of the natural world which was for me tied to a particular sacramental sensibility. There was something holy about the world and that holiness somehow spoke to the presence of God. As Gerard Manley Hopkins puts it, "The world is charged with the glory of God." Children often have a sense of that, and I certainly did. At one point in adulthood, I lost my faith and tried to locate meaning within the beauty apart from the presence of God. It didn't seem enough. It seemed flat. Again, there is a sad/joyfulness in nature. The birds die, the plants die, and although new life returns, there is a death.

For me God's presence in nature is an extremely important spiritual reality. This same presence is called up in the sacramental nature of the church when the material aspects of the world are seen as speaking of the presence of God. This revelation of God through matter is another way of seeing the importance of the resurrection—it isn't just about us, all of creation groans for this kind—of transformation.

Now in later life, staying in touch with nature and God's presence in nature is important for my own spiritual life. Being part of beauty is a reminder that we are a part of the world that God has created. We are also reminded that if we desecrate the world we are desecrating the very part of the divine image found in the natural world.

How do you "stay in touch" with beauty?

I go for a walk, sometimes two or three walks a day, because of my dog. If I don't, I feel out of sorts. If I don't exist

where I can experience beauty often, I feel as if something is missing. Touching the earth is an important touchstone for my spiritual health.

How do you put together your African-American heritage, your love for Christian slave spirituality, and your practice of Eastern Orthodoxy?

A monk in England once asked me if I recognized the similarities between African-American spirituality and Eastern Orthodoxy, and at the time I didn't. But I do now.

Both of these spiritualities share an understanding of the suffering that leads to joy that I mentioned earlier. This understanding is evident in the music of both.

Both also understand suffering is a part of faith. Orthodoxy, in part because of what has happened in Twentieth Century Eastern Europe and Russia, has a strong emphasis on suffering Christianity. Slave Christians have the same experience of suffering. Christianity is grounded in this relationship to suffering and perhaps the more distant we become from this sorrowing reality, the more danger there is of losing something that is important about our faith.

Both emphasize the relationship between the body and the material aspects of creation. Both show that spirit is embodied and that bodies are 'inspirited.' In Orthodoxy, icons, candles, and incense all physically show the visible aspects of the spiritual realm. In African slave Christianity there is less dichotomization between the material and spiritual than you have in Western Christianity.

Another area of similarity is in the emphasis on the person as being an icon of God. In African-American spirituality this would be described as being a child of God. This is so important in the African-American tradition because of the

denial of the value and humanity of the slaves. Both traditions emphasize that we are made in the very likeness and image of God.

In both, personhood is not understood as the lonely self but as one who is related to an ancestry. In Orthodoxy that is seen through the belief that through the icons we are connected to our spiritual ancestors. Icons are not just commemorative but they make present the person depicted in the icon. In African American spirituality, the sense of the ongoing presence of the ancestors is constitutive within the person.

I have a wall in my home with photos of my ancestors. This ancestry wall shows me that I am very much a part of their story and they are very much a part of my story, too. They are not just there in the past but are very much here in the present as protectors, as a community of hope. This ongoing sense of one's ancestors changes the view of death, too. At death rather than being gone, you become an ancestor for those yet to come.

I understand you travel to Harlem every Tuesday to teach writing to the mentally challenged in a community center. Why do you leave the Ivy League where you teach the brightest students and travel to spend time with those who society disregards?

In part, I go for selfish reasons. I am given so much by being there. Again, it's that notion that I mentioned earlier about suffering as a part of authentic Christianity. Certainly there are people who are suffering here in Princeton, but there is something special about the clients at Souls in Motion, most of whom are diagnosed as paranoid schizophrenics. Perhaps because of or in spite of their suffering they are so attuned to compassion for others and show

an amazing gratefulness. I remember times when the clients have talked about their gratefulness to God for having gotten them through. One man around Thanksgiving time wrote that he was thankful to God for his mental illness. As we talked, it became clear that he was simply grateful for who he was, mental illness and all.

For me, Souls in Motion, is a second community that is filled with faith, gratitude, compassion, and hospitality for those who visit. To me, it is a wonderful teaching experience. There is such extemporaneity. I suggest a topic and the clients say these amazing things. They are so honest and unpredictable that there is a gifted nature about the teaching encounter that one rarely gets in the academy.

What advice would you give our readers from your own spiritual life?

I'd pass on something that I am having to relearn myself: holiness is found in the ordinary, in the daily events and encounters we have with others. So often we miss God's presence because we are looking elsewhere. Often we are searching for spiritual experiences and the danger is that we turn those into one more form of spiritual ego gratification. This danger can only be avoided by remembering that it is in the daily experiences where we meet God rather than in the flashy mystical encounters we all long to have. They are nice but they often feed the ego more than the soul.

A TRANSFORMING EXPERIENCE

Mary Baker Eddy: Lighting My Way

Mary Julia Kephart

Mary Baker Eddy is a heroine of mine. I regard her as a great courageous explorer of the power of consciousness and heaing. She worked at a time when the powers in science were becoming overwhelmingly physically oriented. It required immense courage to take the stand that she did.
Larry Dossey, M.D.

The life of Mary Baker Eddy, the discoverer and founder of Christian Science, is being rediscovered today. This is due in part to a resurgence of public interest in mind-body medicine and Mrs. Eddy's own pioneering efforts in the mind-body connection in the mid 1800s. But the real story of her life, and that which has the most relevance to us today, is her discovery of the divine laws of God, which she reduced to a system of Christian healing through prayer. This healing system continues to prove consistent and effective in the cure of physical and moral ailments.

My spiritual journey led me to investigate Mrs. Eddy's discovery of Christian Science, in spite of a long-time prejudice against it.

When I turned to Christian Science in the early 1980s, I

Mary Julia Kephart, an artist and photographer whose work often appears on the cover of Sacred Journey, *led one of the Healing Prayer Circles during the Companions on the Sacred Journey Conference.*

Mary Julia Kephart

had been under the care of a holistic physician for the treatment of hypoglycemia. My regimen included diet, nutritional supplements and exercise. The condition was under control, but not healed. I was looking into holistic medicine because it took into account mental as well as physical conditions. Even while under medical care as a child and young adult, I yearned for a higher form of medicine that included the integration of mind, body, soul and spirit.

When my family's religion failed to present this kind of integration or even what I felt were basic tools for life and success, my search began. Eventually, a twelve-step program, which required of me a whole-hearted turning to a higher power, literally saved my life. As I came to know God as the higher power, to understand God better became my whole reason for being. At the time I began to explore Christian Science, I had been praying for this understanding daily and in earnest. This prayer led me to a Christian Science Reading Room where I was introduced to Mary Baker Eddy's primary work, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. In the preface I read: "In the spirit of Christ's charity, as one who hopeth all things, endureth all things, and is joyful to bear consolation to the sorrowing and healing to the sick, she commits these pages to honest seekers for Truth."

These words alone spoke volumes, and I knew, as an honest seeker for truth, that this book was meant for me. But before I could get further into the book I found I still had to reckon with my earlier misgivings about investigating the discovery of a woman that I had heard was a religious fanatic. I had been told that Christian Scientists worshipped Mrs. Eddy and that her teachings made unrealistic and unnecessary demands on people.

One day the Reading Room attendant told me a little of Mrs. Eddy's life story and this dissolved my prejudice and

misgivings. I learned that she had a difficult life before her discovery of Christian Science. Her search, like mine, for a better life had taken place over many years. Later on when conventional medicine of the mid-1800s did not heal her, she investigated some of the innovative alternative practices of the day, such as, homeopathy and hydropathy. She became aware, through experimentation, of the influence of thought upon the body. Yet while she longed for relief from chronic physical ills, most important to her was a desire to know God as the healer. Her ongoing search took her deeper into the Scriptures for their promises of comfort and healing.

The turning point in Mrs. Eddy's search occurred in 1866 when she experienced a life-threatening accident. Her doctor was unable to help her. Her pastor visited, believing he was seeing her for the last time. After he left, Mrs. Eddy did what she had done throughout her life in times of need, she turned to her Bible and read Gospel accounts of Jesus' healings. She found herself suddenly well. Over the next nine years, Mrs. Eddy came to understand what happened at that moment of healing. Her further scriptural research and growing success in the practice of Christian healing—even incurable cases—led her to conclude that God is the only Cause, or divine Mind, and that every effect is a mental phenomenon. She also realized that the healing ability of Christ Jesus was not limited to a particular time and place, but indicated God's ever present love and care of his creation.

Mrs. Eddy wrote in her autobiography, *Retrospection and Introspection:*

> My immediate recovery from the effects of an injury that neither medicine nor surgery could reach, was the falling apple that led me to the discovery of how to be well myself, and how to make others so. . . . The Bible was my textbook. It answered my questions as to how I was healed; but the Scriptures had to me a new

> meaning, a new tongue. Their spiritual signification appeared; and I apprehended for the first time, in their spiritual meaning, Jesus' teaching and demonstration, and the Principle and rule of spiritual Science and metaphysical healing—in a word, Christian Science.

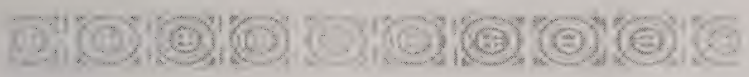
As I learned more of Mrs. Eddy and her discovery, I knew that I'd found what I was looking for. From time to time in the past I had turned to the Bible, but was not able to understand it. *Science and Health* became my guidebook helping me to understand the Bible, especially the teachings of Jesus, which for so long seemed obscure and difficult to put into practice.

Within a week of my asking an experienced Christian Scientist to help me, I was completely and permanently cured of the hypoglycemia, mentioned earlier, which I had been coping with for two years.

Other healings have followed, sometimes through my own prayers and sometimes through the prayers of others. In the course of my continuing study and practice of Christian Science and its method of healing through prayer I've found stability, joy, and purpose in living.

Mary Baker Eddy's discovery of Christian Science challenged the trend materialistic thinking in her time and it continues to do so today. Dr. Larry Dossey and others like him are discovering that there is more to us all than meets the merely material eye. I am grateful for the courage and insight of these perceptive thinkers, past and present, that light the path. To me and many others, Mary Baker Eddy is one whose thought and work have illumined the way to a permanent sense of health and well-being.

ILLUMINATIONS



God passes through the thicket of the world, and wherever his glance falls, he turns all things to beauty.

~St. John of the Cross

Fearing impoverishment, the miserly never give alms.
But the learned man, knowing the danger of wealth,
Distributes his possessions to all.

~Nagarjuna and Sakya Pandit

We pray to God the Power,
But God the Lover
Answers our prayers.

~Sri Chinmoy

This kind of split makes me crazy, this territorializing of the holy. Here God may dwell. Here God may not dwell. It contradicts everything in my experience, which says: God dwells where I dwell. Period.

~Nancy Mairs

One of the annoying things about believing in free will and individual responsibility is the difficulty of finding someone to blame your troubles on. And when you do find somebody, it's remarkable how often his picture turns up on your driver's license.

~P. J. O'Rourke

To enjoy the benefits of Providence is wisdom; to enable others to enjoy them is virtue. He who is indifferent to the welfare of others does not deserve to be called human. The best way to worship God is to ease the distress of the times and to improve the condition of humanity. This is true religion; to cleanse oneself with pure thoughts, pure words, and pure deed.

~Zoroastrian Scriptures, The Zend-Avesta

A thankful person is thankful under all circumstances. A complaining soul complains even if he lives in paradise.

~Baha'u'llah

As often as you can, take a trip out to the fields to pray. All the grasses will join you. They will enter your prayers and give you strength to sing praises to God.

~Rebbe Nachman of Breslov

Love may be silent but not inactive.

~Sri Sri Thakur

Beauty is the supreme mystery of this world. It is a gleam which attracts the attention and yet does nothing to sustain it. . . . It feeds only the part of the soul that gazes.

~Simone Weil

Things are pretty, graceful, rich, elegant, handsome, but until they speak to the imagination, not yet beautiful.

~Ralph Waldo Emerson

What we cultivate and care about inwardly either freshens or poisons the bloodstream of humanity.

~Robert Corin Morris

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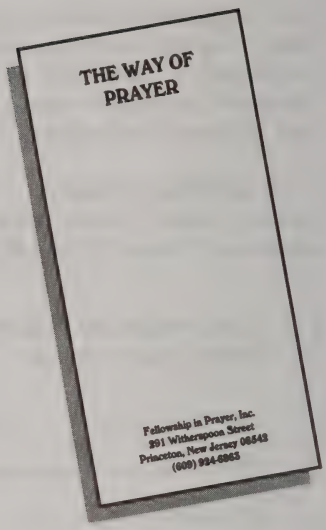

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Please use this space to tell us your thoughts about this publication, *Sacred Journey.*

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

A Quaker Way of Waiting

Philip Harnden

Simone Weil wrote, "To wait patiently in expectation is the foundation of the spiritual life." Though she was not a Quaker, her words express succinctly a Quaker spirituality.

Visitors to a Meeting for Worship of the Religious Society of Friends often call this "silent worship." But we Friends are more apt to speak of it as "waiting in silent expectation." In fact, our worship is not always quiet. But it is always active, not passive. The worshipers in what we call an "unprogrammed meeting," are expectant; they are actively waiting the movement of the Spirit. The silence may be described as pendulous in the old sense of that word: poised, hanging as fruit suspended on a branch, ready at any moment to ripen and drop.

When moved to speak, we speak—or sing or cry or recite. And occasionally we all seem to lean and hearken the same way in our worship. A holy presence is

Philip Harnden is a member of the Syracuse, NY Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends. He serves on the program committee for the American Friends Service Committee projects in upper New York State. For nearly two decades he was the publisher of The Other Side *magazine in Philadelphia.*

felt by all. We have found no better description for this than to call it a "gathered meeting."

Of course, in some sense all people of faith practice waiting in their worship. For many, the waiting comes through ritual and recitation, those great traditions that have sustained believers through the centuries. For others—including Quakers in unprogrammed meetings—the waiting begins in silence. To hear the still, small voice, we try to practice stillness ourselves. As one might weed a garden, tare by tare, we slowly and gently attempt to weed out the jumble of voices tangled in our heads. Just as our meetinghouses are plain and unadorned, so may be our homes, our clothing, even our speech. To find a way, one must prepare a way. So, say Friends, first close the door and become silent.

In Friends' Meeting for Worship, we are always waiting. We value this waiting; we find strength in it even as we sometimes find it exhausting.

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But what of the other waiting in our lives? What of the difficult waiting all humans must at times endure: waiting for news, for test results, for surgical outcomes? Waiting for acceptance or rejection, for a reply, a response? And what of that especially hard and long kind of waiting: waiting for our vocation, for direction? In these circumstances, how are we to wait?

I have often heard my relatives offer this prayer: "May she find her way." It seems to me a warm affirmation of that person who we all know is foundering and needs our prayers, not our advice. Perhaps she is "fuddled and wayless," as Charles Frazier describes the protagonist in his novel *Cold*

Mountain. May she find her way. But how is she to wait?

Perhaps first with an acceptance of waiting as a valid activity. I am grateful for a Quaker tradition of active struggle for change. We struggle to change war to peace, to change enemies to friends, to change injustice and division into a beloved community. But I am also grateful for the Quaker affirmation of active waiting—waiting for the way to open, as Friends often say.

Rainer Maria Rilke thought deeply about the waiting an artist must endure. He advised humility and patience and wrote that being an artist means "not numbering and counting, but ripening like a tree, which doesn't force its sap and stands confidently in the storms of spring, not afraid that afterward summer may not come. It does come."

I suggest that a Quaker way of waiting likewise means not numbering and counting—but *ripening*. To take this quiet way of waiting in our day and age means going against a powerful culture of numbering and counting. We all have been taught to measure ourselves by the numbers: income, academic degrees, advancements, accolades. Now we must instead teach ourselves how to ripen, like the fruit poised on its branch. In the Quaker way, this ripening is the foundation of the spiritual life.

The Swedish poet Tomas Transtromer has written of this work of waiting:

> Task: to be where I am.
> Even when I'm in this solemn and absurd
> role: I am still the place
> where creation does some work on itself.

The Quaker way of waiting remembers how much is hidden from us. Our waiting is connected, joined with a whole creation in wait—an ecology of waiting that binds us with family, neighbor, earth, sky. My wife often reminds me to think of my life as a novel into which I am being written. Enjoy the characters, the comedy, and even the tragedy—but keep turning the pages! The story isn't over yet. Much is still hidden. "Even when I'm in this solemn and absurd role," creation is at work. Wait patiently in expectation.

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When "fuddled and wayless," we need the courage to listen to whatever incoherent cries and whispers we hear.

The Quaker way of waiting is also to listen and watch. "And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." Perhaps we might ponder the zenlike simplicity of this saying of Jesus. For how many among us know how to fully and simply watch? How many of us have prepared ourselves to listen to whatever voices are sent our way?

I have heard a story, perhaps apocryphal, of a Quaker meeting in an urban setting that faced a problem. From time to time during the weekly Meeting for Worship, homeless and seemingly disoriented people wandered in, perhaps attracted by the warmth of the building or the warmth of the meeting itself. Sometimes these people might mumble aloud or even stand and speak loudly and incoherently. When these disruptions began happening frequently, the Friends pondered how best to deal with the situation.

They sought a way that would be both welcoming and compassionate. After much Friendly discernment, a member was appointed to meet such visitors at the door, wel-

come them and then gently steer them into a side room where they were served something warm to eat and where an attentive ear listened to whatever they had to say.

In this way, these Quakers seemed to have found a tender path through a prickly problem. But in time they grew uncomfortable with their "solution." If a Meeting for Worship means waiting expectantly for the movement of the Spirit, who is to say that such movement might not be prompted by any one of God's own? And might not the Creator who spoke through asses and was revealed through burning bushes reach out to us as readily through the seemingly incoherent talk of a stranger off the street? The Friends changed their minds: the visitors were again welcomed into worship.

I do not know if these events actually happened. But I have sat in several meetinghouses where visitors, apparently disoriented in mind, were welcomed and listened to. Only after listening at length would an elder Friend sometimes take the speaker gently in his arms and suggest that it was time to return to the silence.

The Quaker way of waiting encompasses this sort of radical listening and watching. Traditionally, this has included attention both to holy scriptures and to the writings of other seekers on the path. One's own private waiting might well also include a radical listening to one's own past, to one's own body, to dreams and to animals. When we are "fuddled and wayless," we may need a lengthy attention to the way we have already come but have perhaps forgotten. And we might need the courage to listen to whatever incoherent cries and whispers we hear.

A Quaker way of waiting is no easy way. There is no easy way of confronting the blank page or listening for the phone to ring or staring into whatever abyss

lies before us. But we are still the place where creation does some work on itself. Our task is to wait here.

Henry Thoreau tells the story of a beautiful winged insect that emerged, after sixty years, from the apple wood of a farmer's kitchen table. The egg had lain dormant within the wood since the day the tree had been cut. Finally it hatched and the insect gnawed its way out. "Who knows what beautiful and winged life," wrote Thoreau, "may unexpectedly come forth."

Wait silently, expectantly. Do not number or count. Only ripen. Remember much is hidden. Listen and watch. Perhaps a beautiful and winged life will emerge.

SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY

Discernment

Anne B. Walsh

My "spiritual friend" Olivia described how a tiny plant she had brought back from Hawaii flourished and grew large and leafy. Inexplicably some impatiens blossomed around it. She then told of a gardenia tree—no more than a withered stick at the time of her marriage a few years ago—that had become expansive, bushy, green-leafed and fragrant with flowers.

Olivia knew, as did I, that she was speaking about changes in her inner and outer life, too. What had once been tiny and withered was now bursting forth in abundance. Olivia's growth did not happen overnight. It took work and grace. The grace seemed to flow in response to Olivia's answering, "Yes," to an invitation to dig deep within her own heart, examine her own life, and to discern her deepest desires for life. Spirit was and is leading her.

Anne B. Walsh is a Jungian analyst and spiritual director who practices in Princeton and New York City. Anne lead one of the Healing Prayer Circles during the Companions on the Sacred Journey Conference.

Olivia took a big step forward toward discernment in seeking spiritual friendship. When she got in touch with me she spoke of having reached a dead end trying to find her way out of feelings of dryness and deadness. Her relationship with her husband, her work, her music, her practice of hatha yoga—all of which had renewed her in the past were now not satisfying. As we looked at her life, Olivia began to discern that she was taking on too many obligations and was overloaded by trying to fulfill them all to perfection. She was feeling anxious, strained, and limited. Her spiritual life had been kidnapped and straight-jacketed by duty.

Her spiritual life had been kidnapped and straight-jacketed by duty.

I asked, "What is it that you are seeking?" and "What is it that is seeking you?" Her reply spurted forth: "Simplicity, simplicity, and more simplicity." Olivia longed for aloneness, time to sit, to meditate, to drink coffee by the eastern window and watch the first glimpse of the blue-gray-orange-yellow of the early morning sun, to listen to the "purdy-purdy" of the cardinals and the fluting melodies of the finches. She wanted time to get rid of stuff, to not answer the phone, to feel free to say, "No," to people when necessary, to have lots of space to sit and listen, and listen and sit with the voice within. She wanted to breath in and out, to stretch and lengthen, to deepen and to be free of the 10,000 things.

But how would she do this? I reminded her that Martha in the Bible thought there were too many "have-to-dos", too. She said, "Yes, I know, but . . ."

Discernment now required looking at where Olivia lacked inner freedom. What notions were keeping her captive? What fears or what unexamined assumptions were

causing blindness and bondage?

As Olivia looked, she pruned. She tossed out what was causing her resistance. And as she did, she began to remember things. She had loved going to the Thich Nhat Hanh group that gathered in the city. Eating her brown bag lunch and not really talking to anyone, she sat, just breathing, remembering the sage advice: "Breathing in, I smile—Breathing out, I am at peace." When she stood to walk meditatively she had recited: "Walking this green earth, I am at home. I am at peace."

She remembered the eucharist at St. Bart's church when she sang in the choir. The movements of communion had been to her as beautiful as a Hindu mudra—a silent dance. As she remembered these moments, her desire to sing and dance with the Thing-Beyond-Words, the I-Know-Not-What, her longing to plunge into the Center and rest, grew. But her resistance continued. Fears about security, about being crazy and lazy, about turning her back on life or on others, about being an escape artist, lingered. Her doubts and self-doubts blocked further pruning and further movement.

Then illness struck Olivia. A serious, life-threatening illness kept her from pursuing the things that had held her world up. Unable to do the things that she thought no one could do without, she discovered the earth was still in orbit, and those that couldn't get by without her, did.

As she lay in her hospital bed she found she had something very important that she could do: she could pray for herself, for her husband, for her friends, her sister-in-law, her next door neighbor whom she did not like much, for other women with cancer in nearby beds, for all the people of all nations, for creatures. She prayed that all beings everywhere be free from suffring and know the great cause of happiness that ends all suffering.

During her illness, Olivia began intuitively to gather the necessary information. She found there was enough money to prune away the work that stifled her spirit. That set her free to find work that more directly connected her to the sacred. She increased her knowledge of what in her life leads her to be her most authentic self and what quashes her heart. She learned that she loved her husband and that he loves her. She learned that following the deepest longings of her soul led her home to herself—to life and to mystery.

Olivia found herself becoming more loving, more gentle and funnier. She cried more, sometimes for herself and for others. Yet overall she has a great sense of enjoyment. Something inside her has been able to ask, "God, what is it you would have me see?" And the leaves grow greenly.

In sharing some of Olivia's journey, I felt my own roots wiggle down more deeply into the sacred earth and my own drooping leaves perk up. Olivia and I approached discernment as a viney meander—a twisting and turning through sacred and earthy concerns—if there is such a difference.

I found the discernment process a little like walking the funky stone labyrinth behind my husband's office—backward, forward, now here, now there and eventually finding the center, a place of rest, a still point, holy ground. This way of discernment is quite different from other traditional and structured approaches to discerning. Often circumstances more than choice seem to push us into taking the advice of a contemporary yogi: "When you come to a fork in the road, take it." Yet I confess that the best discernment advice I've heard is this: "There is nothing more practical than falling in love with God. Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything."

Labyrinth

Ritual allows those who cannot will themselves out of the secular to perform the spiritual, as dancing allows the tongue-tied man a ceremony of love.

Andre Dubus, A Father's Story

Two weeks before I graduated from college my mother phoned me with a question: "Is there anything you want me to take to the center of the labyrinth?"

She was asking if I had a hope or a question that she could carry with her as she walked. But it was my baby shoes that instantly came to mind. Having never seen the labyrinth, I pictured it to be something like the winding roads of the Andean countryside which are dotted with shrines and graves adorned with license plates, decaying wreaths, and chipped statues of the Madonna.

I later came to learn that my mother's labyrinth is nothing like this. It is an ancient symbol painted on thick canvas and rolled out onto the floor of her church each Wednesday afternoon. People are free to come and walk or dance or run the path all the way to its center, where

Erin White lives in Pennsylvania. This is her first article in Sacred Journey

one is said to be close to God. But I did not know that when she called, so I asked her to go down into the basement and rummage through the boxes for my baby shoes: the pink ones with the crushed tulle and rosebud toes stuffed with old tissue paper. I wanted her to wrap the laces around her fingers and take them to the center.

The shoes no longer fit my feet, of course, feet that had carried me over mountains and through finish lines, paddled me across lakes and pools, sent me down city blocks and dance floors. The soles of my feet were fast and tough. But the feet of my soul were smooth as whispers. The shoes would still fit those flutter-winged feet that did not always know which way to go. I wanted her to take the shoes so that I could think of where they had been, so that I could hold them and they could lead me. So that the tiny part of me that still fit into them, the part that could not run fast enough toward the light, might for a moment know what it feels like to arrive into the presence of God.

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Four years have passed since that phone call and I am living at home, only a few miles from my mother's labyrinth. I am spending the summer in my parents' empty house; they have offered me a place to live in exchange for paying the bills and mowing the lawn while they travel. These chores are turning out to be nothing compared to the task of fending off childhood ghosts and loneliness. I am home to write, to make Big Decisions, and to swim around in the possibility of a new life away from the city. Mostly I am taking naps in the hammock, hating everything I write, and feeling guilty for not finding a real job. Several times a day a labyrinth walking schedule posted on the refrigerator catches my eye, and after some hesitation I decide to give it a try.

On my first labyrinth walk my bare feet feel the edges of

the path painted on the cool tarp. I walk wanting to reach the center and with each step worry that I have been here before, that I have crossed lines or gotten turned around and won't make it. I feel certain that I am somehow behind the woman who started after me, that my *hajj*, my pilgrimage, is destined to last all night.

Once at the center I pick up one of the candles that burns there. I take a breath and feel the candle's glass dish warm in my hands. Its sweet smell reminds me of a chapel I visited periodically on my way to work in the city where a quarter in the metal box bought a candle and a string of prayers to St. Jude, Patron Saint of Lost Causes, my personal favorite. On my first visit I self-consciously lit a candle and blew out the flame on the wooden stick only to realize, an instant too late, that my breath had also extinguished the candles lit by my faithful predecessors, their eager prayers reduced to thin trails of black smoke. In horror I relit the votives, then sunk the stick, flame side down, into the tray of sand by St. Jude's bare feet.

On the labyrinth I am only responsible for my own candle and the prayer it holds in its flame. I am grateful to be moving, to be distracted from the question I always faced after I lit a candle in the chapel and bowed my head dutifully, the flames warming my face like a heat lamp: what in the world should I pray for? On the labyrinth I am one of the few walkers who barely pauses at the center. How terrifying, the idea of meeting God here.

On my second walk I come to the end before I reach the center. I somehow crossed a line and the path led me out right where I started. I worry that God doesn't want me there, then try to reassure myself that God simply wants me determined.

On my second try I walk with a pregnant woman. She

is surprisingly old. Even from across the room I can see thin lines carved into her tired face. My mind wanders with her story and I watch her slow steps, her blouse buttons straining over her stomach as she carefully places each foot ahead of the other on the narrow path. I wonder if she sees in the labyrinth what I sometimes do, a tangled umbilical cord connecting God with the world. She folds her glasses and puts them in her breast pocket, wiping tears from her eyes with the back of her hand. I think of Mary and what she would bring to the labyrinth. I imagine that in the silence of her walk she would feel the certainty and weight of her fate and fear taking hold of her heart. But she, I believe, would leave her fear at the center and take back resolute bravery. A walk on the labyrinth, I am beginning to discover, can force you to face a truth. You continue on toward the center in hopes of receiving the grace that will allow you to accept it.

On my way out of the church I see a sign saying that the church will be loaning the labyrinth to a women's prison south of town. I am moved by the image of the women walking in their orange jumpsuits, the robe of the twenty-first century penitent, and I hope that they are allowed to take off their shoes when they walk. I hope that they are allowed to dance or run or yell if they feel like it. I am reminded of something I read once: the paradox of the labyrinth is that at its center appears to be freedom.

The next week I walk and think of the famous labyrinth in Chartres. I imagine I am a young nun walking the maze listening to monks chanting in the antechapel, instead of hearing "Anonymous 4" on the continuous loop CD player in my air-conditioned sanctuary. I am her, holding my candle on the throne of my cold hands, hearing the soles of my thick leather shoes walk the labyrinth engraved on the floor of this heaven, a floor too cold to be felt barefoot like Moses'

holy ground. I pray as the young nun might have, my heart finally open. Guide me as I walk with light, only hoping to walk in it.

Later I learn that hardly anyone walks the labyrinth in Chartres now. The path is covered with chairs, but the six-petaled rose at its center is reflected in the colorful stained glass window above. A perfect match if folded over, glass to stone. The determined walk with their eyes.

This summer at home is about moving in the physical world with the same fury that I am moving with inside. I want my body to live what my spirit is living, or at least tire trying. The labyrinth is saving me. I cannot meditate, I can hardly sit through a church service. Had I the money I might fly to Israel and roam the Judean hills or fly to Spain and join the thousands of jubilant pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago who fling their shoes into the sea upon arriving at their sacred destination. Instead I ride my bicycle to my parents' church every Wednesday afternoon and pray with my feet. Finally, near the end of the summer, certainty still slipping through my fingers like sand, I get into my car and drive to the desert.

I convince a friend of mine to join me on a pilgrimage to Christ in the Desert Monastery in New Mexico. The woman at the Ghost Ranch Visitor's Center says it is thirteen miles down the dirt road. We follow the red waters of the Chama River, the tire ruts on the road becoming deeper and deeper. I try to avoid boulders. It starts to rain and the road turns to

soft clay. Afraid of getting stranded in a desert flood, we turn back. "I think we might have passed the turn anyway," my friend says. "We've been driving a good long time, at least twenty miles, I would think." I reset the trip odometer on the car and turn around. We reach the main road safe and sound. The odometer reads eight miles.

We drive for hours toward a tiny dot on the map, a mineral springs spa I read about years ago in a travel magazine. *Ojo Caliente,* the hot eye. It is the only place on the planet where five different kinds of natural springs exist in one place. We drive in past dark, eat grilled river trout, and fall exhausted into our beds.

In the morning we soak in warm pools with sandy floors like the ocean. Ravenous by noon, I dry off and walk back to the hotel. Sitting on the porch, eating tree apples and a melted chocolate bar, I talk with an Indian woman selling jewelry. I am rocked by the song of her voice, its lilting cadence that moves with the arc of a wave, as though she is answering all her own questions in time. I stare out into the courtyard at a gravel path marked with stones. I realize that the stones mark out a Hopi medicine wheel, the symbol of life repeating itself. It is a labyrinth. I slide my feet back into my sandals and walk the path. Desert sun beats down on my bare shoulders drying my hair in an instant. The Indian woman's dog walks with me, four paws in and out of the stones. In the center there are benches and space to make a fire. The air is still and warm. The red rock formations glow like embers against the cold blue sky. In the distance I can see only desert, although I know that beyond are the mountains that helped to raise me, and far beyond them, the city where I finally grew up. For the first time all summer I allow myself to miss the city desperately, the place itself and all the people there I love with a devotion that has raised the city's eastern flatness

into a vista as beloved and familiar to me as the mountaintops of my childhood. I think about the water back at the spa and I wonder when I will be in a place like this again. The center of this labyrinth cannot hold me. I don't even trace my way out again, but follow the dog as he leaps over stones and makes his own way out.

I walk my mother's labyrinth one last time before I return to the city. I watch my feet as they knowingly navigate the path. I have spent a good part of this summer barefoot and I wonder how these feet will ever fit into panty hose and heels again. Crimson polish is chipping from my big toes and even my baby toe is brown from dirt and sun. Heel to toe on the canvas I am really covering some distance; have my feet stretched out in all this freedom? I think about my baby shoes and how they were my first connection to the labyrinth. There is no part of me that fits into those little shoes now. Even my soul had grown larger, if only to accommodate deeper longings. Better to be barefoot and feel everything against my skin, I decide. Better to let my feet grow tough enough to withstand the stones and broken glass that I cannot avoid, no matter how hard I try.

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I have returned to the city now, returned to the cluttered streets, long lines and the screech of the El train careening on its tracks. In my absence these nuisances took on new meanings to me, meanings of home and responsibility and love. I started going to Mass at the chapel where I first lit those candles for St. Jude. I am still lighting candles, and I am having less trouble with the prayers that follow. My life is full of people in need of blessing and a few moments of rest in the palm of God's hand. And I am beginning to understand that acts done out of a desire for closeness with God are themselves prayers. Carefully relighting

the candles for St. Jude, walking the Labyrinth again when I missed a turn in a turnless path, these were humble and uncertain acts of prayer. These acts were sacred.

My new church does not have a labyrinth, and this is all right with me. The best synagogue is the heart, says an old Yiddish proverb. And for now, so is the best labyrinth. I can walk the wiry twists and turns of my own heart whenever I feel brave enough, all the way to the cool and windless center. This destination, where I find the paradox of company in solitude, is not often reached. Not nearly as often as the journey toward it is begun, stopped, and begun again.

This is not to say that I do not sometimes miss the labyrinth, miss those first moments of walking when the path rewarded my desire by bringing me right next to the center before drawing me away again to do the real work of preparing. But for now I am content to sit, rise, kneel, and rise again. Sometimes though, in the moments before Mass begins, I slide my feet from my shoes and let them rest on the cold tiles of the sanctuary floor. Just to get that familiar feeling of being ready, and of knowing where it is I want to go.

Ohio Haiku: Divine Revelation

Chris Bunsey

You touch me—and now
I know in sudden stillness
All I need to know.

Acceptance

Patricia G. Rourke

She lifted
each small weakness
as a jewel
glittering in the light,
pressed them
to her lips
murmuring:
Holy, Holy

Chris Bunsey taught high school English for thirty years while he and his wife raised five children near Cleveland, Ohio. His poems try to recreate the epiphanies that flash unexpectedly in everyday life.

Patricia G. Rourke is a Catholic nun and clinical psychologist who works with people with life threatening illnesses. She has published two books of poetry, Letters from the Edge *and* What Continues. *She lives in Michigan.*

The Lesson

Skylar H. Burris

Day drained slowly
From God's purple sky
As we sat together
And spoke with honesty.
"If today is my teacher,"
He looked toward the horizon,
"Then let me learn to love
Not just you
But the earth
And the stars."
Lightening bugs torched the night
Nature's own fireworks.
He watched in awe
His eyes reflecting the fire,
And I knew that he had learned.

Skylar Burris attended the University of Virginia where she earned her B.A. in English and Economics and is currently pursuing a Master's in English at the University of Texas at Brownsville. Skylar has been writing poetry for over ten years and she recently began publishing a literary journal, Ancient Paths.

Translation of the Lord's Prayer from King James to Gaian

Claudia L'Amoreaux

Great Spirit, Divine One, Creator
who is heaven earth rock wind insect tree fox
human of every size shape color

Holy are your infinite names chanted sung whispered
shouted in every language, tongue.

We will midwife the rebirth of Gaia
as best we can
restoring the Great Law of Peace.

Guide our hands to the soil and seed
honoring the alchemy of food.
Let us remember your abundance
and share the bread of life with any who hunger.

We are for giving
and giving and giving.
We trust in the give-away.
We give and receive.

Let us be humble before the darkness and the light
walking in harmony beside them.
Give us courage to know them intimately
both within and without.

For you have breathed it all—
the behind, the above, the below, the beyond.
Your awesome power courses in our veins
and animates our hearts.

You are the Great Drum.
We thank you.

Robin Becker dances during the conference closing ceremony.

Claudia L'Amoreaux is a poet, editor and lifelong learning facilitator. She is writing a series of Gaian prayers for people practicing Earth-based spirituality. She hosts Haven, a webcenter for global studies (www.haven.net).

A Personal Experience of the Lord's Prayer

Peggy Frutiger Hanson

Our Loving Creator
Who lives in all of us,
How we are humbled by Your greatness!
Your presence be here,
Your love be demonstrated
In our lives
As is it through You.
Provide us today
The opportunity to meet our needs.
And forgive us for oppressing others
As we forgive
Those who oppress us.
Don't let us fall into self-doubt.
Preserve the dignity of this community.
For Yours
is Truth
And Empowerment
And Celebration
Forever
And ever.
Hurray!

Peggy Frutiger Hanson is a social worker, political activist, and writer who holds a graduate degree in psychology. She is currently a full time mother and homemaker who believes motherhood meets her needs for political action.

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER, INC.
291 Witherspoon Street
Princeton, New Jersey 08542-3227
Phone: 609-924-6863
Fax: 609-924-6910

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Paul Walsh

EDITOR
Rebecca Laird

ART DIRECTOR
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